



February 22, 2017

Testimony of Noel Federle  
Chairperson of S.M.A.R.T., Inc. (Southbury & Middlebury Acting Responsibly Together)

**\*H.B. No. 7027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.**

February 23 2017 Appropriations Subcommittee on Health Public Hearing  
Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services, Regional Action Council Funding

Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Senator Gerratana, Senator Markley, Representative Dillon and members of the Appropriations Subcommittee. I am writing to you tonight to strongly oppose the grave cuts to regional action councils that will decimate the current prevention network structure.

I am writing to you as both a Licensed Psychotherapist who specializes in the areas of addiction, and as the Chairperson of S.M.A.R.T., Inc. (Southbury & Middlebury Acting Responsibly Together). Our organization acts as the Local Prevention Council for the towns of Middlebury and Southbury. In the four years that we have been the Local Prevention Council we have been able to provide invaluable awareness, prevention, intervention, and support services in the areas of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse, as well as promote strategies, protective factors, and positive coping skills in the overall health and wellness for our young people, families, and our communities.

As you may know Regional Action Councils (RAC's) are included in the budget cuts currently being proposed. These cuts would completely eliminate the Regional Action Councils. NO other agency is doing the prevention work that the RACs do. These cuts would prevent CNVRAC and other RACs from leveraging other funding. It would eliminate the ability to support and enhance local prevention initiatives. It would also eliminate local efforts to combat and prevent suicide, opioid overdoses, prescription drug misuse, and youth substance use around the state. If you look at the data statewide, as well as town data, you will see how important providing these services are to our communities. Unfortunately in our towns of Middlebury and Southbury we have experienced, and continue to experience, too many tragic preventable deaths of our adolescents and young adults.



As you are well aware, Connecticut has been experiencing a heroin epidemic as heroin overdoses have continued to rise with more than 70 % of people struggling with heroin addiction having started with prescription drugs. It would be “pennywise and pound foolish” to cut prevention funding as this life-threatening epidemic has the potential to impact every community in Connecticut. It is imperative that local communities have the needed resources and supports provided by the RAC’s to help address this rising rate of opioid dependence.

S.M.A.R.T., Inc. is a solely volunteer organization and we **cannot** provide the needed services that we provide if not for the funding opportunities of CNVRAC. This would be a significant loss not only for us but to the 12 communities served by CNVRAC, therefore I urge you to keep intact this important prevention funding.

I ask that you **NOT SUPPORT** the elimination of Regional Action Council funding.

Thank you and for further question please call me at 203-788-5199.

Sincerely,

*Noel Federle*

Noel Federle, M.A., NCC, LPC

Chairperson of S.M.A.R.T., Inc.

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